

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED ON WILDERNESS PROPOSALS IN NEVADA, FLORIDA

Public hearings to discuss results of wilderness studies involving national wildlife refuge areas are scheduled in Nevada and in Florida in October, the Interior Department announced today.

Specific times and the areas involved are:

- I. Desert National Wildlife Range in Clark and Lincoln Counties, Nevada, 1,443,100 acres, hearing Oct. 23 at 9 a.m. in the Western Environmental Research Laboratory auditorium, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 944 East Harmon Avenue, Las Vegas.

The 1,588,000-acre Desert National Wildlife Range was established in 1936 to protect desert bighorn sheep, whose numbers have increased to an estimated 1,000 animals on the Range--the largest known population of this species in the world.

The wilderness study area comprised all lands within the Range, plus 58,000 acres of adjacent public domain lands. Approximately 88 percent of the study area was found suitable for further consideration as wilderness.

A map and other information about the Desert wilderness proposal is available from the Refuge Manager, Desert National Wildlife Range, 1500 North Decatur Boulevard, Las Vegas, Nevada 89108, or the Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 3737, Portland, Oregon 97208. Oral or

written statements may be submitted at the hearing or written comments may be sent to the Regional Director by Nov. 23, 1971, when the hearing record will be closed.

II. Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Citrus and Hernando Counties, Florida, 30,514 acres, hearing Oct. 29 at 9 a.m. at the Crystal River Middle School auditorium in Crystal River.

The refuge, established in 1943, serves as a wintering area for approximately 20,000 ducks and 30,000 coots, and many other water birds use the refuge for resting, feeding, and nesting each year. Several threatened wildlife species, including alligators, brown pelicans, wood ibis, bald eagles, and ospreys, may be observed on the refuge, whose productive habitat results from Gulf of Mexico waters mixing with the waters of the Homosassa and Chassahowitzka Rivers.

A map and other information about the Chassahowitzka wilderness study is available from the Refuge Manager, Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, Route 1, Box 153, Homosassa, Florida 32646, or the Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Peachtree-Seventh Building, Atlanta, Georgia 30323. Oral or written statements may be submitted at the hearing or written comments can be sent to the Regional Director by Nov. 29, 1971, when the hearing record will be closed.

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